

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates May 2017

Communications Portfolio

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 104

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Page 110, 24/05/2017

Topic: Audio Description

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

Senator URQUHART: I have a few questions to do with the audio description. I raised some with the department earlier today and they suggested that they could not answer some but you might be able to. I understand that the ABC's iview audio description trial ended in June last year and it was confirmed in February that the report on this trial was sent to the minister in October 2016. Can you tell me how many people were engaged in the trial and what is some of the key feedback the ABC has received from participants?

Ms Guthrie: On this point, I think Mr Millett can provide you with more details on the audio description trial.

Mr Millett: The report has been issued publicly by the government. I will have to take on notice the question concerning the number of people who participated in the trial. I think it was discussed this afternoon that the trial was regarded as a success, although it was limited in scope. I think the ABC is very keen to be working on the working group with other people in the sector to try to work out what the way forward is for audio description.

Senator URQUHART: So you will take on notice to provide the key feedback from participants and the number of people who were engaged in the trial? Do you consider that the trial was a success? You have said that we heard this afternoon.

Mr Millett: Yes, as was discussed this afternoon there were two trials, the first on broadcasting and the second on using the catch-up service. It was successful. There were some technical difficulties in relation to access to the actual site itself, but, yes, I think it was successful. I must admit that it was a fairly group who accessed it, but they found it to be quite useful.

Senator URQUHART: Can you tell me what metrics were used to gauge the success or otherwise of the trial? Can you provide us with any result?

Mr Millett: I will take that on notice in terms of the metrics. I emphasise that the trial was limited in scope. A lot of discussion this afternoon was about, 'What is the way forward?' My view of that would be that the industry needs to come to some kind of consensus about how broad audio description should be applied—what are the technical aspects of it and all of those issues. I think that the working group needs to work through that.

Senator URQUHART: Given that audio description is provided in many other countries, has the ABC been able to estimate a budget figure to provide this service in Australia?

Answer:

The ABC iview audio description trial commenced on 14 April 2015 and concluded in July 2016. During the trial period, there were a total of 158,277 plays of audio described programs on iview over the course of the 15 month trial. This represents 0.58 per cent of total program plays on iview where programs with audio description were available. The ABC is unable to identify the number of individual participants who utilised audio described programs.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates May 2017
Communications Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

The ABC conducted an online audience survey in relation to the AD iView trial. The link to the survey was available from the iView site and also provided to stakeholder groups to pass on to their constituents. The survey received 234 responses and the results were:

- 76 per cent of respondents were aware of audio described programs on iView.
- 21 per cent were aware of iView, but not aware of the availability of AD programs on the platform (only 3 per cent were not aware of iView at all).
- Of those who were aware of AD programs on iView (76 per cent of respondents), 82 per cent had used the AD content (this translates to 60 per cent of the total survey responses).
- Of those who were not aware of AD programs on iView (24 per cent of respondents), 69 per cent stated that they were more likely to attempt to access the service after being made aware of it.
- Of those who used the AD service on iView, most respondents said that they did so very frequently and usage of iView became more frequent once the AD service commenced.

The survey also found:

- Documentary was the most sought after genre among respondents who were users of iView and non-users.
- Drama and comedy were also popular genres, whereas entertainment and children's programming were less preferred by respondents.
- The majority of respondents who were users (more than 75 per cent) were positive about the selection of AD programs on iView and said that they found the AD track of good quality.
- Almost all respondents said they were likely to recommend the service to others.